

Parshat Naso and Shavuot

Sacrifice for the Sake of Heaven

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This week's parsha discusses the topic of the nazir. "Speak to Bnei Yisrael and say to them: A man or woman who shall disassociate himself by taking a nazirite vow of abstinence for the sake of Hashem" (Bamidbar 6:2) The Torah states that one who wishes to make himself holy to Hashem, takes this vow upon himself. It includes separation from the material desire of wine and any impurity of the dead, letting one's hair grow long, and an overall spiritual fulfillment of a direct and pure connection to Hashem Yisborach.

The Sfas Emes writes that this act of personal self-sacrifice is unparalleled in the Torah, and, thus, also unparalleled in kedusha. Through the nazir's separation from materialism, he summons forth an immense amount of kedusha upon him from Hashem. The nazir, uniquely, finds his "*ruach ha'pnimi*" within his corporeal body. This idea, writes the Sfas Emes, is the greatest key in life to the "*hisgalut*" (revelation) of the treasure houses of Hashem Yisborach.

Similarly, the Ibn Ezra on this pasuk connects the word "*yafli*" (disassociate) to the word "*pele*" (wonder). He explains that a nazir - or anyone who observes such self-sacrifice, and accepts such a heavy physical and spiritual load - is truly considered a rare phenomenon. Most of our world is very set and, unfortunately, content with running after their personal desires. Thus, when one can overcome all of his personal desires to perform such a holy feat, he is truly an "*eved Hashem*," and, as the pasuk states, "set aside for Hashem."

This idea of the nazir comes into play heavily on the upcoming holiday of Shavuot. As our ancestors stood at Har Sinai, they proclaimed in unity "*na'aseh v'nishma*." The GR"A zt"l explains that the reason for the specific order of these words is because Bnei Yisrael, unlike the other nations, were wholeheartedly willing to subject themselves to the holy words of the Torah before their own personal desires, questions, or doubts. "We will **do**," and then "we will **listen**." This amazing display of self-sacrifice from the comforts of this world to blindly run toward Hashem was the reason that Hashem lavished them with plentiful reward.

We, too, attempt to bring this idea into practice nowadays, to a certain extent, through the practice of "*tikun le'il shavuos*." We devote ourselves to Torah and ignore sleep while on the precipice to the anniversary of our ancestors' great sacrifice at Matan Torah. Through our devotion and personal self-sacrifice, we, too, proclaim in unity "*na'aseh v'nishma*" every Shavout. What, then, is our reward? In the Kisevei Arizal, also cited by the Be'er Heiteiv (O.C. 494:9), it says: "One who makes the sacrifice to wholeheartedly devote himself to Torah on Shavuot and block out all other issues of desire and general physicality is promised not to be harmed the entire year!" In other words, if you make the sacrifice to Hashem, He will, in turn, make the sacrifice for you. This is the lesson of the Nazir. This is the lesson of Shavuot.

May we all merit this upcoming Shavuot, through our actions, to the bracha that the Torah juxtaposes to this idea following the Nazir: "May Hashem bless you and safeguard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you. May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you."